

# Inspection of Coventry College

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 February 2025

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

Coventry College is a large general further education college. There is one campus that serves the local community and surrounding areas. The college provides vocational, technical and professional education and training to learners of all ages, from entry level to higher education.

At the time of the inspection, there were 4,637 learners. Of these, 2,930 learners were studying education programmes for young people. Most of these learners study at level 3, with the largest number of learners studying childcare, health and social care, performing arts and digital courses. Five learners are in their second year of a T level in digital software.

There were 1,707 learners enrolled on adult learning programmes, with half of them studying at level 1 or below. Most of these courses are English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) or English and mathematics. Around 100 learners were studying on access to higher education courses. There were nine learners studying a wall insulation Skills Bootcamp.

There were 95 learners with high needs, a third of whom were studying courses specifically designed to develop their life skills and independence.

Leaders work with one subcontractor, which provides training for 97 learners on level 3 courses in sports coaching and development in five semi-professional football clubs across the country.

## What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners find the college a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment where they receive high levels of support, encouragement and praise from staff. Learners reflect the city's rich diversity. They show respect for one another and the staff they work with. Learners of all ages and abilities work together effectively and foster a strong sense of community.

Learners understand how to contribute to society positively. Teachers help them understand how they can become active citizens and take part in their local communities. Learners participate in several community activities, including those studying on travel and tourism courses who collect Christmas gifts to donate to children's charities and those on ESOL courses who gather donations for local food banks and taking part in litter picking. Learners from across the college also participate in an active learner voice committee that works with leaders to improve the learner experience.

Learners enjoy their studies and learn new skills and knowledge in up-to-date, well-equipped facilities. Learners have access to a modern theatre, dance studios and large vehicle maintenance workshops. Leaders collaborate closely with local employers to provide industry-standard equipment, including a simulated MOT testing bay and a hospital ward. However, learners with high needs studying life skills lack access to a spacious kitchen to enable them to practise their individual cooking skills.

Most learners attend well. Teachers work with learners to understand their reasons for not attending. On the occasions when learners are absent, staff provide resources for learners to use to catch up. Staff monitor learners' completion of these activities rigorously. Staff have identified that a few learners need support from external agencies and provide space for support workers to come into college so learners do not miss lessons and incur travel costs.

Learners have positive attitudes and professional behaviours. They are highly motivated to complete their studies. Learners are polite and courteous to each other. In performing arts, learners attentively listen to each other while they share constructive criticism to improve their performances. Learners on practical subjects demonstrate professional behaviours and strictly adhere to health and safety requirements, using the correct personal protective equipment.

Learners can take part in various enrichment activities beyond their academic and vocational courses. These include guest speakers, educational trips and the use of sports facilities. Learners in hair and beauty have access to industry representatives who help them learn about new products that are coming onto the market. Learners studying on performance courses work at the local theatre and arts festivals as front-of-house and backstage staff. Although some learners benefit from these activities, participation is not consistently high across all subjects.

Learners feel safe at the college. They are taught how to recognise behaviours linked to radicalisation and how to safeguard themselves against extremism. Teachers also inform learners about the local risks they may face and the strategies to avoid them. Staff actively collaborate with local police and support agencies to ensure learners receive the information they need to stay and remain safe.

Most learners have a clear understanding of life in modern Britain. They demonstrate a strong understanding of fundamental British values, which they confidently apply to their vocational settings. Learners on hair and beauty courses describe how they would respectfully work with diverse client groups. ESOL learners discuss the importance of electing the country's leaders. However, on a small number of courses for young people, learners are less confident in recalling British values and how they can apply them to their lives.

Learners of all ages and abilities receive specialised support, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers individualise courses for learners with high needs to develop their independence. Staff quickly establish strong support systems for asylum seekers and care-experienced young people, providing mentors and access to financial aid. They welcome learners who are new to the country and encourage them to participate in college activities, meet new people and make friends.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers work effectively with stakeholders and employers to ensure their curriculum offer meets skills priorities. They understand local and regional needs. Leaders use this information well to plan courses, qualifications and the training they offer. Managers have selected courses in high-demand areas, including welding, leadership, vehicle electrification and construction.

Leaders have set ambitious targets for staff in curriculum areas to work with relevant stakeholders to develop courses. Working closely with Coventry City Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority, leaders have developed a clear action plan to meet the needs and demands of the area. Leaders have designed Skills Bootcamps with employers to enable those who wish to gain employment in the construction sector. Teachers have also developed short courses to help those who are unemployed to develop their job-seeking skills and gain practical experience in vocational subjects. The proportion of adult learners who gain employment as a result of their studies has steadily increased over the past two years.

Leaders have introduced employer panels to enable curriculum teams to work closely with their stakeholders. The majority use these well to better understand the needs of the sectors they serve. In these areas, stakeholders are actively involved in designing the content of courses to reflect the current needs of their industry. For example, managers have drawn on employers' expertise to develop courses in car air-conditioning systems and fluorinated gas certification. In most subjects, leaders

have started to use the valuable feedback they have received from stakeholders to revise their curriculums. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this work.

Teachers work closely with stakeholders to update their professional knowledge and skills. They have undertaken professional development in emerging areas such as automotive technologies, green manufacturing and laser welding equipment. Employers also work with teachers to set learners real-life project briefs to prepare them for working in industry.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders' ambition is to enhance the life chances and career opportunities of Coventry residents. Staff warmly welcome and engage with local communities. They ensure that learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, take part in ambitious curriculums. This approach equips most learners with a diverse range of skills and knowledge, helping them transition to positive destinations and acquire the skills necessary to live and work in the UK.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have substantially improved the education learners receive. Leaders have developed the Coventry College quality mark to ensure that teaching is of a high standard and that lessons are well structured, focus on achievement and have a clear purpose. However, the proportion of learners who achieve and move on to positive next steps has improved markedly over the past two years. Leaders recognise that several courses, particularly T levels, still need to improve and have clear actions and support in place to achieve this.

Managers and teachers logically sequence their curriculums to support learners in continually developing their knowledge and skills throughout their studies. In performing arts, musical theatre students begin by exploring genres, styles and performance elements while honing their skills in classical, modern and contemporary dance. They then progress to ensemble work, studying artistic structure and taking on lead roles. On level 1 multi-skills courses, teachers work with learners who have no prior experience in the building trade. Teachers begin by teaching health and safety theory and the safe use of tools, guiding learners through projects to demonstrate their understanding. As they progress, learners work on practical projects which gradually increase in complexity such as making simple corner joints to laying roof tiles. These learners acquire a broad range of skills and move on to level 2 courses.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. They have significantly invested in the development of teachers' skills, which has improved the quality of teaching. Coaches work with curriculum teams and individual teachers to improve their teaching and deepen their understanding of effective teaching and learning strategies. Teachers participate in professional updating with local employers and have used these experiences to develop their curriculums. For example, teachers of information technology used the knowledge they gained to teach advanced computer programming languages to their learners.

Learners with high needs who participate in academic and vocational courses receive effective support that helps them to move on to further study and prepare for life after college. Learners achieve at least as well as their peers. Where appropriate, teachers collaborate with therapists to develop individualised courses. Learners with high needs on specialist courses learn life skills and start to prepare for becoming independent, including taking part in community activities and gaining work experience in the college's public areas. These include working in the canteen, library and reception. Managers have recently developed links with outside agencies to enable learners to experience external work placements and apply for supported internships.

Leaders and managers have developed courses that help adults to move on to work. Learners taking part in Skills Bootcamps gain new skills and knowledge, such as retrofitting and cladding techniques, which increases their chances of getting interviews and securing jobs after completing their course. Adult learners who study childcare courses learn about the role of learning support assistants and how to support children in primary schools. This helps them develop the confidence to apply for new jobs and gain promotions in their current workplace.

Most teachers provide learners with feedback on their work, which is supportive and helps them work on areas they need to improve. Most learners' work improves over time. However, in a small minority of subjects, such as plumbing and mathematics, teachers' feedback does not always correct learners' misconceptions or provide sufficient guidance to help learners understand what they need to do to improve.

Managers and teachers have developed a comprehensive careers programme, which staff teach effectively to most learners. Teachers provide learners with up-to-date and accurate information, advice and guidance to help them achieve their career aspirations. Learners of all ages participate in helpful career lessons, where they learn to write CVs, practise for interviews and attend careers fairs. These activities prepare most learners well for their next steps. However, leaders recognise that a small number of courses do not offer enough information about apprenticeships.

Governance is strong. Leaders have recruited governors with a wide range of expertise and experience. Governors use their skills to shape the college's strategy and hold senior leaders accountable for the quality of education. They understand its strengths and weaknesses well. Governors also have link roles with curriculum teams and with those staff responsible for safeguarding. To further understand the information they receive, governors take part in quality assurance activities, including meeting with learners and participating in learning walks.

Leaders have implemented effective subcontracting arrangements to ensure high-quality teaching. They maintain good oversight of the provision and hold subcontractors accountable for their performance. Learners who study at five semi-professional football clubs nationwide achieve sports coaching and development qualifications, as well as competing in tournaments.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure all learners are provided with appropriate feedback so they continue to improve and gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Improve achievement in the small number of courses where this is not yet high enough.
- Improve resources in the kitchen learning environment for learners on life skills courses.
- Promote enrichment activity and encourage participation for more learners.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Carol Thomas
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 to 18 November 2022
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Elite Form Ltd



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal for curriculum innovation, quality and performance, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

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